

ZOLA, NOVELIST AND HEFOEMEE
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dancing madly in his padded cell, one instinctively retraces their careers back to the early days when both had looked so hopefully on life ; and one recognises that a fatal environment, more than natural worthlessness, has been the great cause of their downfall. Nana already appears — in her childhood and her youth — in the pages of "L'Assommoir," but Zola does not pass direct from that work to the later career of Gervaise's daughter. He first takes Gervaise's elder children, her sons by Lantier; and " L'(Euvre " (XIV) unfolds the painful story of Claude, the painter, a glimpse of whom has been given previously in " Le Ventre de Paris/¹ Again in " L'CEuvre," one finds a record of downfall, but, whereas in " L'Assom-rnoir " it has largely resulted from environment and circumstances, it now proceeds more directly from an evil heredity. Claude stands virtually on the border line that parts insanity from genius, and thus in his career, the old hypotheses of Moreau of Tours, and those subsequently enunciated in England by Nesbit, might find play. In the end, after a life of conflict and misery, insanity triumphs and Claude destroys himself. His tale, as one has stated previously, is linked with a picture of the French art-world Fortu-nately a current of human interest flows through the book, for beside Claude the unhappy Christine, his wife, appears: she, like Gervaise, at first being a good, true,

and courageous
woman, one who commits the irremediable
mistake of link-
ing her life with that of a man fated to failure
and insanity.
In these last sections of Zola's series the
march of de-
generescence is hastened; downfall follows
downfall; before
long that of individuals is to be succeeded by
a supreme
collapse, that of the *rSgime* under which they
live. Thus,